

# FireFighter

Trade Union Magazine of the Year

The magazine of the Fire Brigades Union [www.fbu.org.uk](http://www.fbu.org.uk)

July 2010

## CUTS

How vulnerable are you  
and your family? p10



**LESSONS  
OF THE  
SOUTH  
YORKSHIRE  
DISPUTE**

See p14



**CHIEF  
OFFICERS'  
PAY**

How much is  
yours getting?

See p16



# The 'bloated' public sector



The new government has been very clear since the election that it intends to make huge cuts to public expenditure. We are told the public sector is "bloated" and inefficient whereas, supposedly, the private sector is "lean", efficient and wealth creating.

It seems logical on one level – we have huge public debts so we need to cut back. It's just the same as running a household budget isn't it?

But nothing is ever that straightforward. When we look a bit

closer we begin to see what it means in reality.

## The value of public services

The public sector means the schools our children attend and the hospitals we go to when we are sick. The public sector means the support given to our elderly people when they are unable to look after themselves and need additional care.

The public sector means the social workers who try to protect children vulnerable to violence and abuse.

The public sector means the people who clean our streets and take away

our domestic refuse. Of course you can "save" money by reducing collections from once a week to every fortnight – but then nobody wants stinking rubbish festering in the bins for rats to grow fat on.

Of course there is waste. Too much public money has gone to private consultants who have come into our public services and advised how to "improve" them – often with disastrous results.

Too much money has gone to boost the salaries of those at the very top – while the rest of us are told to tighten

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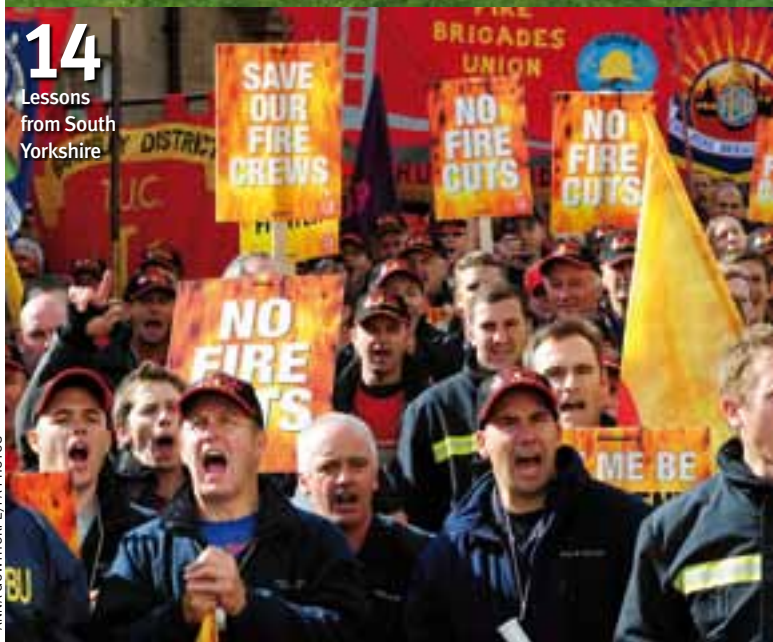
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ANNA GOWTHORPE/PA PHOTOS



our belts. And too much money has gone on ill thought out projects – such as control regionalisation.

### No 'golden age' in the fire service

In the fire and rescue service, there has been no golden age of huge investment. We have fewer firefighters than we had ten years ago. The cuts we have already seen have been targeted precisely at the so-called "frontline" – and we can expect more of the same. There has been no protection of "frontline" services in fire and rescue – so why should we expect any different anywhere else?

The agenda is very clear – it is to slash significantly public services and this will impact on the lives of all of us and on the type of society we live in.

### Who caused the crisis?

Two years ago there was huge anger at the role the banks had played in sparking a global economic catastrophe. Northern Rock ... Lehman Brothers ... Royal Bank of Scotland ... Goldman Sachs ... Sir Fred Goodwin ... remember them?

Well, apparently we all now need to forget them because the people who *really* caused the world economic disaster are those who clean your local hospital or serve school dinners to your kids or look after your mum in her care home.

Just to state this highlights what nonsense it is. And it is a nonsense which needs to be exposed. The banks were bailed out by more than £850 billion of our money. Yet already

bonuses are back and the wealthiest in society are doing fine. *The Sunday Times* Rich List recently revealed that the 1,000 richest people in the country increased their wealth by £77 billion last year, bringing their total wealth to £335 billion – equal to more than one third of the national debt. While we are told to tighten our belts and accept the "inevitable" cuts, the wealth of the wealthiest has grown by 30% during the worst period of recession!

We are in for a tough time. We will need to stand together to defend our jobs, our services and our pensions.

And next time you hear David Cameron saying: "We're all in this together" ... well, decide for yourself.

**Matt Wrack**

## In memory of Alan Kynoch

Throughout Friday 18 June, FBU members in Grampian began to learn of Brother Alan Kynoch's tragic passing earlier that day.

Alan had been preparing to go off duty when he suddenly collapsed on station. Along with his close comrades at our Elgin branch, the immediate thoughts of FBU members throughout our brigade and region go out to his wife Anne and his family.

This tragic news comes at a time when Alan and Anne were beginning to make plans due to the short period of time he had left to serve.

Alan Kynoch was 53 when he died and had given 27 years of service. He worked in Strathclyde and joined Grampian fire and rescue service in 1993.

Especially because Alan was one of our own, we will make every effort to provide the necessary support for Anne.

**Alan Paterson**  
FBU Grampian brigade secretary

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July 2010

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## Des res: fire station, one careful owner

HERTS

**T**o the estate agent, it's just another desirable property. "Prominent main road frontage, suitable for a variety of uses, Radlett town centre and mainline railway station both within 200m," says the agent's brochure.

There's just one problem. This property is the only fire station in Radlett, Hertfordshire. The station was closed in 2006 as part of a council cost-cutting exercise, even though it attended 300 calls a year. Now it's up for sale.

Tony Smith, FBU Hertfordshire secretary, said: "We believe that it is morally unjustifiable that Hertfordshire county council should now look to profit from the sale of such a valuable historic amenity in which so much community funding and effort has been invested.

"The people of Radlett are looking to their politicians to start fulfilling their election promises. This building is and always has been a community asset and that's how it should remain."

A campaign group, SOFAR (Save our fire and rescue) is demanding either the reinstatement of the fire station or that the site is used for a community safety centre, incorporating fire, police and ambulance services.

The group, supported by the Fire Brigades Union, accuses Hertfordshire county council of bad faith. The council had agreed that if the community wanted to keep its fire station, it would have to pay for it. The funding was secured from the community by the action group, but the politicians reneged on the deal and put the

station up for sale.

Carolynne Brown, chair of the campaign, said: "SOFAR is totally opposed to the proposed sale of the land. We believe that the building and land should be retained for community use and we will continue to campaign against a change of use of the site, or any planning application."



## SAVE OUR LOCAL FIRE STATION

Plans to sell a landmark fire station in Brighton have been shelved because officials cannot find anywhere to build a replacement.

Firefighters and campaigners (left) have been fighting to save Preston Circus fire station, after East Sussex fire and rescue service revealed it wanted to sell the building last year.

Steve Liszka, FBU rep for Preston Circus, said: "This supports our view that East Sussex fire authority cannot find a site better than Preston Circus

and it is highly unlikely they will find another site as good as this one."

He added: "We are opposed to the move. We think Preston Circus is perfectly equipped to cope with Brighton's needs."

Despite announcing that it will delay the sell-off for at least a year because it cannot find a suitable site for a new station, the fire authority has vowed to push on with the project. The campaign to defend Preston Circus will continue.





Bob Fitz-Gerald, FBU ULF regional co-ordinator, and Lorna Taylor, the FBU ULF skills for life advisor (centre), receive the ULF national award from Lenny Henry (right) and former minister Pat McFadden

# FBU union learning goes from strength to strength

## EDUCATION

**T**he FBU's involvement in the Union Learning Fund (ULF) has gone from strength to strength, with awards and successful bids this year.

The union succeeded with applications made at the end of 2009 and the beginning of 2010. New funding will go to England (£1.1 million), Scotland (£45,000) and Northern Ireland (£15,000). Wales has a further year of funding before a new application is to be submitted.

Trevor Shanahan, FBU national ULF project manager, said: "It is six years since the Fire Brigades Union successfully applied for national funding from the Union Learning Fund to invest in raising and engaging members and employees of the fire and rescue service in lifelong learning."

The project has meant the development of a new union official role to the workplace

– the union learning representative (ULR).

He added: "We have trained close on 500 ULRs across the UK fire and rescue service over the last six years and now, with the FBU union learning policy looking to embed lifelong learning the new project seeks to re-invigorate and engage all ULRs."

The project has delivered 17,000 courses and 3,000 new qualifications with over 20,000 FRS employees already having had some involvement in learning opportunities.

Shanahan said: "The ULF project has had a profound impact on lifelong learning within the UK fire and rescue service. FBU members and fire and rescue service employees continue to show their willingness and readiness to engage in learning, refresh their learning and develop new skills."

→ Further information can be obtained by contacting Trevor Shanahan, at [trevor.shanahan@fbu.org.uk](mailto:trevor.shanahan@fbu.org.uk) or 01670 534685.

# 'Change culture to avoid conflict'

## LONDON

**T**he Fire Brigades Union is calling on the commissioner of the London fire brigade to head off a summer of industrial strife by facing down authority managers and politicians who stand accused of stoking the flames of conflict.

Industrial relations in the brigade have soured following attempts by councillor Brian Coleman and his militant colleagues in the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority to force through a number of unwelcome measures. Firefighters across London are angry at moves to introduce changes to shift patterns and other conditions of service in the face of overwhelming workforce opposition.

FBU London regional organiser Ben Sprung said: "When the 12-hour shift proposals were first announced, the FBU ran a consultative ballot, overseen by an independent scrutineer, which asked

members whether they wanted a new shift system or whether they were happy with the present one. A staggering 98% of members voted against the proposals for a new shift system. Despite this very clear response, the brigade has continued as if nothing happened. They completely ignored the very clear wishes of their own workforce and carried on regardless."

The mood of dissatisfaction is likely to result in an official ballot for industrial action, after a series of branch meetings across the capital revealed the true extent of the bitterness felt by firefighters.

"But," said Sprung, "it is still within the gift of authority managers to prevent an industrial battle if they wish to do so. What it would take, though, is a complete culture change in the way they approach industrial relations with the FBU, and it would mean that that small band of hardline, militant politicians, who seem to be doing so much damage to our service must be tackled head-on."

## Sounding off!

### KEVIN HERNIMAN

South West FBU regional official

### Help keep our 'unisex' kit data up to date

The FBU and its personal protective equipment sub-committee have been working to get information from fire and rescue services about PPE. It is staggering that many fire and rescue services have not signed up to Firebuy for a variety of reasons, one being they did not like the colour choices.

Now some fire and rescue services are insisting that 'unisex' firefighters exist because they are issuing 'unisex' PPE. Why? Because it is a cheaper option. But if fire and rescue services are honest, it is male kit with a 'unisex' label sewn in.

PPE was tested on the manikins Ralph (Research Aim Longer Protection against Heat) and Sophie (System Objective



The female test manikin Sophie wearing male-fit kit is exposed to 20% more burns

Protection against Heat In an Emergency). It was found that Sophie wearing male-fit kit is exposed to 20% more burns than if she is wearing female-fit PPE. Based on the results of the tests carried out so far it appears that significant differences in burn injury do occur between male and female manikins wearing the same design of clothing. This type of manikin fire testing is an optional requirement of EN 469 and of EN ISO 11612 (revision of EN 531) – the European standards covering firefighters' protective clothing.

If our female firefighters are wearing unisex kit, they are exposed to more danger. And the law states that all PPE must be fitted correctly to ALL firefighters.

Our members are still suffering "reddening" injuries whilst training in controlled conditions, although their PPE is up to EN 469 standard. Surely our members must be afforded the best possible protection whilst they are putting their lives on the line every day and to save them from catastrophic injuries?

I am collecting information on which fire and rescue services are issuing "unisex" fire kit. Please help us to keep our database up to date.

→ Contact: [kevin.herniman@fbu.org.uk](mailto:kevin.herniman@fbu.org.uk) or 0117 9355132.

DAVID BURROWS

## Brigade's snap review of services

ESSEX

**T**he Fire Brigades Union met Essex fire service managers last month after the sudden announcement of a rapid but exhaustive review of office and frontline services.

The announcement came the day before the FBU was due to meet senior managers to discuss final proposals for a potential compromise settlement to the ongoing dispute over last year's cuts in firefighters and frontline 999 services.

Keith Flynn, Essex FBU secretary, said: "Industrial relations have begun to improve and we look forward to reaching a negotiated settlement to the current dispute in the very near future and hope that this can lead to a more cooperative approach in dealing with the review announced by the service today."

### Wake up and smell the coffee

According to LibDem treasury minister Danny Alexander, £6,000 has been spent on coffee machines for each new regional control centre. FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said: "This is small beer compared to the huge overall cost of the regional control centres and to the £43 million and rising that is being spent on consultants' fees for this project. Both Danny Alexander's party and the Conservatives were pledged to stop the regional control centres. They should stop dithering, and do it."



FBU Member Benefits

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[www.fbuinsurance.co.uk](http://www.fbuinsurance.co.uk)

## First minister promises to try to protect pensions

PENSIONS

**A**lex Salmond, first minister of Scotland, has promised to protect firefighters' pensions, after visiting a fire station at the request of the FBU.

Gordon McQuade, FBU brigade secretary for Central Scotland, said: "I asked the first minister if he would come along to one of the Central Scotland stations to discuss issues relating to the Scottish Fire Service.

"Alex Salmond came along

to our Alloa station and he discussed issues on the fire service with the firefighters. He gave a pledge to try and protect the firefighters' pensions, as he sees these as a right that we signed up to and not something that should be taken away."



Alex Salmond, first minister of Scotland, local SNP Westminster parliament candidate Annabelle Ewing and MSP Keith Brown with FBU officials and firefighters at Alloa fire station in central Scotland

## Employers delay on pay

PAY

**E**mployers have delayed their response to the FBU's pay claim, citing fears about government cuts.

The delay was revealed at last month's meeting of the National Joint Council (NJC).

The FBU submitted a claim for a rise in all NJC pay rates equal to the increase in the retail price index (RPI) of June of this year which was 5.1%.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said: "We have made clear to the employers that we do not accept that fire service pay should be sacrificed as a result of decisions made by the new government. We have insisted that the employers respond to the claim as early as possible."

He added: "Members will have noted the difficulties on pay faced by our colleagues in other public services.

"It is clear that we face tough times as the government and many employers attempt to use the economic crisis to make attacks on pay, on pensions and on other conditions of service.

"We made clear to the employers that firefighters and other public sector workers did not cause the economic crisis and should not be made to pay the price for it"

The claim for 2010 was based on the view that FBU members should not suffer real cuts in living standards as a result of below-inflation pay rises.

## Big jump in trade unionists killed

GLOBAL UNIONS

**T**here was a sharp increase in the murder of trade unionists in 2009.

Around the world 101 were killed – an increase of 30% over 2008. The international trade union centre ITUC said 48 were killed in Colombia. Twenty-two of these were senior union leaders and five were women.

Latin America generally was a dangerous place for trade unionists. Of the other trade unionists killed, 16 were in Guatemala, 12 in Honduras, six in Mexico, four in Brazil and three in the Dominican Republic.

Despite the onslaught, unions remain the largest voluntary organisations in the world.



Luis Arguello, a firefighter and trade unionist in Bogotá, the capital of Colombia, where almost one trade unionist a week is murdered

JESS HURD/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK



## POLITICS

**T**he FBU went to parliament last month to set out the union's priorities for the new government and to get our parliamentary group organised

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack spoke at the all-party parliamentary group on fire safety and rescue on 7 June. He told the packed committee room that the FBU has five immediate issues for the new government and the new parliament.

Priority number one was to scrap FiReControl. Wrack said: "We would expect the new government to keep its promise, scrap the scheme and update existing control rooms with new technology – as has been done in Scotland."

The FBU also wants the law changed to account for firefighters' role in responding to flooding. Firefighters responded magnificently to the 2007 floods, and this was recognised by the Pitt Review.

Wrack said: "The new government should impose a statutory duty on fire and rescue services to respond to flooding."

### National standards

A third priority was national standards and guidance. Wrack told MPs about the drastic decline in attendance time standards over the last decade and the postcode lottery of response under IRMP. He explained the FBU's "It's about time" campaign, for national standards of fire cover – at least at the level of the old system – preferably better.

Wrack said: "The FBU wants authoritative national guidance to improve our service and to protect firefighters."

A further priority is firefighter safety.

# Making the union's case to MPs

## FBU PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

Although the FBU is not affiliated to any political party, it does have to engage in politics. With a public sector employer and political decisions affecting the fire and rescue service, the union cannot ignore politics.

The union has written to all MPs about its priorities for the fire and rescue service. The FBU's parliamentary group of MPs has been reconstituted, with John McDonnell MP once again the secretary. The union will be coordinating its work with other independent unions, to ensure that firefighters and other workers' voices are heard in parliament.

Wrack reminded MPs that a decade ago it had become very rare for firefighters to be killed on duty. However since "modernisation", firefighter fatalities have escalated. Over the last five years 18 firefighters have

died while on duty in the UK; 14 of them at incidents. Ten firefighters have died while fighting fires.

The FBU believes this is because of the downgrading of emergency intervention. The FBU wants lessons to be learned from fatalities and tangible changes in resources and training to minimise the risk of firefighters dying in the line of duty.

### Firefighter jobs

The final point was to warn MPs not to cut the fire and rescue service. Fire and rescue service funding cuts mean one thing: firefighter jobs lost. And firefighter jobs lost mean greater risk to public and firefighter safety. Firefighters still make thousands of rescues every year. The range and diversity of emergency incidents firefighters are expected to deal with has grown.

Wrack said: "Our message to the government is: If you're considering cutting the fire and rescue service funding – think again."



DUNCAN PHILLIPS/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK



VIEW FROM THE AERIAL LADDER PLATFORM







## Health and safety matters at chemical fires

### FIRST DEPLOYMENT OF AIR QUALITY CELL SINCE BUNCEFIELD

Around 100 firefighters successfully tackled a fire at Grosvenor Chemicals in Linthwaite, near Huddersfield on 24 May. At the height of the fire, 25 fire engines attended from West Yorkshire and neighbouring brigades.

The fire was in a storage section and involved pesticides and glue-based products. As a precaution, West Yorkshire fire and rescue service (WYFRS) advised members of the public living nearby to stay indoors and to contact the NHS if they developed respiratory problems.

WYFRS said that, due to the hard work of firefighters, the fire was contained before it reached bulk chemical storage tanks and the majority of the run-off

**Firefighters are rightly worried about exposure to hazardous substances at fires – especially those at chemical plants**

water was contained on the site.

The main health concern came from the smoke plume. For the first time, the air quality cell (AQC) – a national, multi-agency group of technical experts – was deployed. The AQC was set up to coordinate air quality data in the wake of the explosion at the Buncefield oil storage depot in 2005.

FBU conference this year again passed a resolution on exposure to toxins. Firefighters are rightly worried about exposure to hazardous substances at fires – especially those at chemical plants.

West Yorkshire FBU officials are seeking more information on the Grosvenor Chemicals fire. They are particularly concerned about the time taken from the AQC being requested by the incident commander to the deployment of the AQC, which could not attend the scene swiftly enough to capture sufficient useful data.

The union wants to see comprehensive monitoring carried out at incidents like this, to protect the health of firefighters and members of the public.

Firefighters at Grosvenor Chemicals in Linthwaite near Huddersfield

ANNA GOWTHORPE/PA PHOTOS



# WORKERS AND THE VULNERABLE EXPECTED TO PAY

**Government launches the most vicious attack on public services in living memory**

**T**he first big lie of the new coalition government is that its savage cuts programme will be “fair”. It has even given it a name: “progressive cuts”. Last month chancellor George Osborne announced that welfare benefits, tax credits and public sector pensions were top of his hit-list – part of £40bn in additional cuts in the next five years. This is in addition to £73bn of cuts already planned – the biggest slash and burn of public services in recent history.

We do not yet know the full impact of cuts on the fire and rescue service. But we do know that cuts already announced and others in the pipeline will have a horrific impact on the living standards of firefighters and their families.

A two-year pay freeze (really a pay cut when inflation is taken into account), a commission to attack public sector pensions, together with higher taxes and fewer services were all announced in the budget. The government says we are all in it together. But workers are expected to pay – while the

government’s fat-cat friends still live a life of luxury. The Institute of Fiscal Studies estimates that the cuts will cost the average family £1,000 a year. Public sector workers are expected to bear the brunt of cuts, while the rich, who hardly use public services, are barely affected.

As the new fire minister Bob Neill put it when he slipped up in the House of Commons on 10 June: “Those in greatest need ultimately bear the burden of paying off the debt which this country has been left.”

## **Attacks on children’s services**

The government says the budget deficit has to be reduced if we are not to leave our children with a huge legacy of debt. But children and other vulnerable people are among the first to be hit by the cuts.

The TUC’s *Cuts Watch* shows that, despite government promises about frontline services and fairness, the cuts are already hitting those with the greatest need.

For example, the coalition has decided to axe plans to provide children from low-paid families with free school meals. This measure would have extended the entitlement to about half a million working families from September this year, making a real difference to their children’s wellbeing.

The Child Poverty Action Group’s Imran Hussain estimates that suspending this provision is equivalent to taking away £600 a year from a family with two children – or at least a 1% income-tax increase for the families it was meant to help. Other projects

**The government says we are all in it together. But workers are expected to pay while fat cats still live a life of luxury.**







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JOHN BIRDSALL/PA PHOTOS



JESS HURD/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

scrapped, facing cuts and or under threat range from inexpensive education programmes to large school building budgets.

Free swimming for under 17s and over 60s – planned as an Olympic legacy – has been withdrawn. Charges will now be re-instated across the country to “save” £40 million. Some £5 million is being cut from England’s *Play Strategy* – which aims to improve children’s play facilities and build new adventure playgrounds.

*Every Child a Reader*, a programme to support children with literacy and reading difficulties, faces £5 million of cuts – and its future is not certain. The extended schools programme, which provides 8am–6pm activities for children, allowing more parents to balance work and care, may also be cut.

To fund the expansion of so-called “academies” – which would further fragment schools as well as undermine the national pay and conditions of teachers – the multi-million pound refurbishment of hundreds of schools across the UK faces the axe. So more crumbling schools with leaky roofs, damp walls and worn out carpets.

Some of the poorest women and children will lose up to £1,200 a year from changes announced in the budget. Cuts to the Sure Start maternity grant and baby element to tax credits, the abolition of the health in pregnancy grant and the scrapping of the planned toddler tax credit will take over £1,000 a year from the mouths of needy children.

## Benefits lost

Other benefits for children will be cut. Child benefit, usually paid direct to mothers, is to be frozen for three years. Tax credits are to be cut. Payments will fall for a family getting more than £40,000 from next year. This will affect almost all firefighters with children whose partner works.

Benefits will rise by less than inflation because the chancellor broke the link with retail prices. This all adds up to a miserable attack on the living standards of children and those they live with – especially those on low incomes.

## Taxes up

Value added tax (VAT) will go up to a massive 20% from 4 January 2011. The increase will cost households an extra £500 a year, according to economists.

VAT is a regressive tax. That means that the poorer you are, the higher proportion of your income goes on VAT. This is the opposite of progressive taxes, where the more you earn, the more tax you pay. So an increase in VAT will hit the poorest households hardest. The gap between rich and poor will become ever wider. The vulnerable and worst off will inevitably go without basic necessities.

The VAT increase will also hit jobs, slow the pace of economic recovery and add to inflation.

## A nightmare future

What will the cuts mean? The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development – the UK’s professional body for HR managers

– estimates that the cuts will mean 750,000 public sector workers thrown out of work. It estimates that unemployment will reach 3 million by 2012 and stay there until at least 2015. It also says “there is little prospect of real wage growth” – rather “real wage cuts in the public sector” throughout this period.

John Hills, a professor at the London School of Economics, estimates that the poorest fifth of households will lose 10% of their income from the cuts – compared to 1.5% from the richest fifth.

The budget stated that government departments like CLG should expect cuts of a whopping 25% over four years – this can only mean firefighter jobs under threat. The government’s spending review is due to end in October. A further round of cuts is expected after that.

The nightmare vision for the next five years is fewer jobs, lower pay, fewer services and higher taxes.

The government says that our whole way of life will be affected for decades to come. It is right – if it gets away with it. But this will only happen if unions do nothing. The government will only be able to do it if working class people let it get away with it.

## There is an alternative

Workers did not cause the crisis, but are expected to pay for it. But there is another way. The perpetrators should be made to pay. Those who are able to pay – the businesses, the banks, the filthy rich who have done well for decades – they should pay the bill for this crisis.

There’s plenty of money to pay for public services:

- £123bn – the tax evaded or avoided by the rich
- £97bn – saved by cancelling Trident
- £18bn – restoring corporation tax to 1997 levels
- £19bn – if the top rate of income tax was 60% (as it was under Thatcher)

A 50% tax on all income above £100,000 would bring in £2.3bn. Abolishing the UK’s domicile rule (which allows the super-rich to avoid paying tax in the UK) would net £3bn. A “Robin Hood” tax on all foreign exchange dealings in sterling would bring in £3.2bn. An empty property tax could net £5bn.

The job of the trade union movement is to stand up and resist the cuts. The cuts have started, but much worse is to come unless unions act.

That means convincing people at work that solidarity and collective action can make a difference. All over Europe workers are refusing to accept the bill for the crisis. We have been warned.

Now we need to defend our living standards.

✚ TUC Cuts Watch

[www.touchstoneblog.org.uk/category/cuts-watch](http://www.touchstoneblog.org.uk/category/cuts-watch)





**The nightmare vision for  
the next five years is fewer  
jobs, lower pay, fewer  
services and higher taxes**

## **WHAT £40bn IN ADDITIONAL CUTS WILL MEAN**

- ❖ The cuts will cost the average family £1,000 a year
- ❖ Extra VAT = £500 a year for an average family
- ❖ Free school meals cut = £600 a year
- ❖ Pay freeze means a pay cut after inflation
- ❖ The poorest hit hardest





Firefighters from across the country demonstrate their support for South Yorkshire colleagues



# Lessons from the South Yorkshire dispute

Ian Murray, Region 4 executive council member, explains how FBU members organised in South Yorkshire last year





ANNA GOWTHORPE/PA PHOTOS

of imposition was withdrawn the FBU would commence a ballot of their members for action short of strike. All wholetime uniformed employees up to the role of watch manager were balloted. Staff working the retained duty system (RDS) and those above the role of watch manager were not included as they were not directly affected by the imposition. SYFR immediately withdrew its threat of imposition and requested that the matter be referred to the National Joint Council's resolution advisory panel.

### Escalation

On 29 June 2009 the FBU was informed that SYFR intended to issue an HR1 form, giving advance notice to 744 firefighters that they planned to use a dismissal and re-engagement process to get 12-hour shifts introduced. In essence this meant that only the staff that agreed to the contractual changes would be re-engaged by SYFR.

Despite SYFR trying to define this act as a "technicality" the trade dispute was lifted to a whole new level. The FBU had no option but to respond to this new threat from SYFR by balloting members again, but this time for discontinuous strike action. The difference this time was that this ballot would involve all FBU members in SYFR to maximise its effectiveness.

In response to the escalation of events and following a request from the region, FBU head office assigned national officer Sean Starbuck and FBU organiser Daniel Giblin to South Yorkshire with a brief to assist the campaign. Local officials briefed them on the situation regarding membership engagement and recognised that in order to secure a successful ballot outcome, a tremendous amount of work would be necessary.

The FBU organiser immediately set up a matrix system for South Yorkshire branches, colour coding them on a traffic light system. This included a system for separating the different watches at the wholetime stations, which gave officials an indicator of branches or watches that had or had not been visited but, more importantly, indicated feedback

**This hard work was well rewarded when the ballot result was announced and over 80% of members had voted 'Yes'**

from the places that had been visited.

The organiser identified that there were areas that had been overlooked by the officials in the first ballot. He indicated that the members working the RDS would also be pivotal to any success that strike action would bring, as SYFR had taken it for granted that they would provide cover in the event of any strike action. So a concentrated effort was made to speak to these members.

The FBU organiser, along with brigade officials, visited every RDS branch. This was hugely successfully and resulted in five out of six RDS branches immediately backing action. Subsequent efforts did result in members at the one remaining RDS branch (with very few FBU members due to a local internal dispute many years ago) backing action.

The organiser programmed a series of recurring meetings that covered every branch and, where necessary watches, and allocated these according to the brigade officials' availability.

The officials had a clear view on the attitude of the membership and were confident that the ballot would produce a good result. This hard work was well rewarded when the ballot result was announced and over 80% of members had voted "Yes".

The organising did not stop once the ballot was finished. Branch meetings continued with a regular once-a-week campaign meeting, which grew in numbers from a handful at the start to a large roomful on a regular basis. The campaign meeting was open to all members but the request was for at least one member from every branch, preferably one from every watch, to attend. The organiser recorded contact details from regular attendees and ensured that every branch was represented. The majority were officially elected to make up a reinvigorated brigade committee with a new branch structure.

I have no doubt that the ideas, input, commitment and organisational skills of the FBU organiser proved invaluable in the South Yorkshire dispute and helped to breathe life into a sleeping giant that is now well on the way recovery.

**I have no doubt that the ideas, input, commitment and organisational skills of the FBU organiser proved invaluable**

**T**he FBU trade dispute with South Yorkshire fire and rescue service (SYFR) began in earnest in December 2008 when the authority approved the introduction of 12-hour shifts for all operational station-based shift staff.

Over the following months officials tried to negotiate a collective agreement and started a campaign to resist the proposals that were vehemently opposed by members.

Locally, aspects of the organisation were weak. Not all stations had branch reps and the divisional structure of the brigade committee was not working. Brigade committees in general were poorly attended and the few officials who did attend were being put under extreme pressure from management.

After sham negotiations, the FBU was told that SYFR intended to impose the 12-hour shifts. The FBU responded to this threat by initiating a campaign and registering a trade dispute with the fire authority. This trade dispute stated that unless the threat

# PAY **MIND THE** GAP

**Firefighters' pay has barely risen in recent years. But chief fire officers have done very nicely, thank you**



**A**lmost every chief fire officer in the UK is paid more than £100,000 a year, with pension and other benefits on top. That's just one of the damning findings from research carried out for the Fire Brigades Union by trade union researchers from the Labour Research Department (LRD).

### Chiefs' pay

LRD asked every fire and rescue service in the UK for the gross pay of chief fire officers – that is pay before income tax is paid, excluding employers' national insurance, employers' pension contributions, and other benefits such as car allowances. The results are set out in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1 is made up of over half (30) of the fire and rescue services in the UK, which provided the amount chief officers received in 2009 (usually 1 April).

The highest earner was the London fire commissioner, with almost £200,000 a year in salary. But almost every other chief fire officer

Table 1 **Chief officers' pay**

FRS	2004	2009	% increase 2004-9
London	144,549	199,473	38
Avon	99,597	165,034	66
Staffordshire	119,000	154,207	30
Kent	120,947	152,411	26
West Midlands	116,751	152,058	30
Cheshire	112,475	149,156	33
Hampshire	119,414	142,399	19
Tyne and Wear	112,302	136,611	22
Humberside	95,784	135,779	42
Durham & Darlington	93,279	129,543	39
Dorset	95,184	129,282	36
Mid & West Wales	98,676	124,590	26
Cornwall	88,559	121,200	37
Lothian and Borders	99,210	121,092	22
Warwickshire	84,831	120,054	42
Northern Ireland	102,621	117,633	15
Cumbria	n/a	114,999	
Buckinghamshire	98,545	113,877	16
Highland and Islands	95,491	113,901	19
Grampian	95,679	110,774	16
South Wales	87,192	110,150	26
North Wales	n/a	109,238	
Gloucestershire	102,739	106,852 <sup>1</sup>	4
Norfolk	n/a	105,276	
Central Scotland	92,610	104,199	
Fife	89,814	103,401	15
Tayside	91,305	101,367	11
Dumfries and Galloway	80,994	97,289	20
Isle of Wight	n/a	94,699	
Wiltshire	n/a	80,000 <sup>1</sup>	

Source  
Freedom of Information requests, Labour Research Department, 2009-2010  
<sup>1</sup> part year only

in the table gets over £100,000 a year.

Although all 57 fire and rescue services responded, not all provided the exact data required. Often they hid behind concerns of "privacy" – as if the pay of senior public sector figures should be a private matter, even when they are paid out of taxpayers' money.

Table 2 consists of a further 24 fire and rescue services, which provided the pay bands for their chiefs – the minimum and maximum they were earning in 2009. The highest figure was for Merseyside, with between £180,000 and £189,999 for 2009. Again, the pay bands revealed that almost every chief received over £100,000 in salary.

### Pay over the last five years

The FBU asked LRD to obtain the figures going back to 2003, to get some sort of picture of how pay has increased under so-called "modernisation". The comparison is best done with those fire and rescue services which provided exact figures. These are also set out in Table 1. For the 25 chief officers for which this information could be obtained, their pay went up by an average of 27% over the five years since 2004. This works out at 5.4% a year – around double the rate of inflation.

Some chief officers received massive increases in pay. In Kent, the chief officer's pay increased by two-thirds (66%) in just five years, while in Humberside and in Warwickshire, it went up by 42%. These figures would no doubt be justified as "commensurate with the job and the responsibilities that the role involves". But it seems more likely that chief officers have been paid more in order to implement the last government's modernisation agenda – cutting fire-fighters jobs, closing fire stations, imposing IRMPs and other changes.

The comparisons also contrast starkly with the pay of ordinary firefighters. In 2009 the pay of a competent firefighter was £28,199. For a watch manager (B) last year it was £30,994 as set out by the National Joint Council.

This means that chief fire officers were earning as much as six times the pay of a regular firefighter, and at least three times as much.

The differences have also grown. Over the same period (2004-2009), both a competent firefighter and a watch manager's pay went up by 12.8%, or 2.6% a year – not much more than the rate of inflation. From the available figures, chiefs pay increased twice as fast as that – further widening the gap between those who do the work and those that oversee it.

### No pay justice

The rates of pay for chief fire officers are not quite as high as those found across other parts of the public sector. However the public sector is increasingly infected with a culture of self-enrichment, in which astronomic rates of pay

Table 2 **Chief officers' pay bands**

FRS, chief fire officer pay bands	2004	2009
Merseyside	110,000-119,999	180,000-189,999
Essex	110,000-119,000	160,000-169,999
Nottinghamshire	120,000-129,999	160,000-169,999 <sup>2</sup>
Cambridgeshire	100,000-109,999	150,000-159,999
Cleveland	90,000-99,999	150,000-159,999
Strathclyde	110,000-119,999	150,000-159,999
Greater Manchester	115,000-120,000	150,000-155,000
West Yorkshire	n/a	150,000-159,999 <sup>3</sup>
South Yorkshire	120,000-124,999	145,000-149,999
Lancashire	105,000-109,200	142,500
East Sussex	100,000-109,999	140,000-149,999
North Yorkshire	85,000-89,999	140,000-144,999
Devon & Somerset	n/a	135,000-140,000
Bedfordshire	90,000-99,999	130,000-139,999
Leicestershire	95,000-100,000	130,000-135,000
Oxfordshire	n/a	120,000-130,000
Hertfordshire	105,518	113,630-129,450
Northamptonshire	n/a	112,000-117,000
Hereford & Worcester	n/a	110,000-119,999
West Sussex	88,002-105,000	108,999-133,221
Royal Berkshire	85,100-102,100	104,600-127,840
Northumberland	n/a	102,500-112,500
Surrey	85,671-100,788	97,638-115,425
Lincolnshire	70,000-80,000	90,000-100,000

Source  
Labour Research Department, 2009-2010, using Freedom of Information requests and fire and rescue service accounts,  
<sup>2</sup> includes expenses  
<sup>3</sup> includes "taxable benefits"  
Of those not included in the tables, Suffolk only provided a pay band for brigade managers of £80,000-£110,000; Derbyshire only provided a total for brigade managers of £505,561, divided between five post holders for 2008/09; and Shropshire only provided the figure of £322,197, divided between four brigade managers for 2008/09.

are given to run down the welfare state and open the road to further privatisation, deregulation and casual labour. This is a culture that many chief fire officers have bought into. It is a culture that does much to undermine the good name of the fire and rescue service in the eyes of the public.

Firefighters and other public sector workers such as nurses, teachers and others who do socially useful work will be told that a pay freeze is the best they can hope for in the years ahead – and that most probably they will be in for a pay cut in real terms.

This is a disgrace. Firefighters and other workers did not cause the economic crisis. Firefighters have been underpaid for generations, with politicians offering warm words instead of the just reward for the vital work that is done. Yet the current situation is different: we are expected to pay for fixing the system we did not break. We have paid for the bank bailout with our taxes; now we are expected to pay again to balance the books. In anyone's language that's a double robbery.

That is why it should be a scandal for public servants like chief fire officers to receive exorbitant salaries.

# Some don't like it hot

## Workplace temperature

**M**any thousands of workers in indoor workplaces like offices, shops and factories face high temperatures at work all year round, but especially so in the summer. Fire stations and control rooms are no exception. At times, working inside during the hot weather is not healthy.

If people get too hot, they risk dizziness, fainting or heat cramps. In very hot conditions the body's blood temperature rises. If the blood temperature rises above 39°C, there is a risk of heat stroke or collapse. Delirium or confusion can occur above 41°C. Blood temperatures at this level can prove fatal and even if a worker does recover, they may have suffered irreparable organ damage.

Even at lower temperatures, heat leads to a loss of concentration and increased tiredness, which means that workers are more likely to put themselves or others at risk. How we are affected by heat is also influenced by humidity and the physical nature of the work. Other factors influencing how heat will affect somebody is their degree of fitness, age and metabolism.

### The law at work

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare)

### THE UNION VIEW

Unions want a maximum temperature limit to serve as a point where employers must take action. The TUC is calling for a maximum working temperature of 30°C, or 27°C for those doing strenuous work. A "trigger temperature" would forewarn employers to prevent discomfort by introducing measures, such as building redesign, insulation and ventilation systems. Workers, whose exposure to heat cannot be reduced, should be provided with adequate breaks and offered job rotation.

Regulations 1992 state that: "During working hours, the temperature in all workplaces inside buildings shall be reasonable." The regulations also require employers to provide "a sufficient number of thermometers" to enable workers to determine the temperature.

However the law treats cold temperatures differently from hot temperatures. During cold weather, employers are legally obliged to act when temperatures drop below minimum standards. An approved

code of practice (ACOP) accompanying the regulations lays down a minimum working temperature of 16°C. If the work involves severe physical effort, 13°C is acceptable.

However, when it comes to high temperatures in indoor workplaces, there is no legal maximum temperature. The ACOP merely says that "all reasonable steps should be taken to achieve a reasonably comfortable temperature", such as providing air-cooling plant, shading windows and siting workstations away from radiant heat. But it suggests no maximum limit.

Some professional organisations do indicate the range of acceptable working temperatures for human beings. The World Health Organisation states that, in temperate climates such as Britain, the optimum indoor temperature is between 18°C and 24°C. The Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers, whose members design buildings, recommends that temperatures should not exceed 27°C.

### HSE guidance

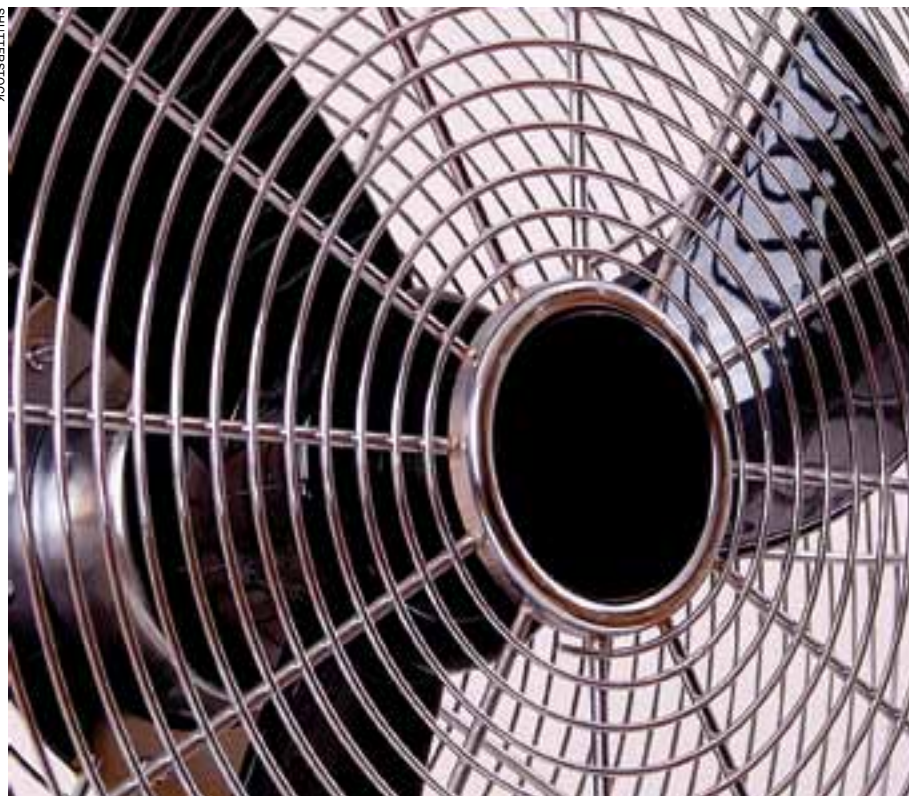
The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) booklet, *Thermal comfort in the workplace: guidance for employers*, suggests a range of 13°C to 30°C, but it emphasises that this may not ensure thermal comfort when other factors are taken into account. These factors include ventilation, humidity, the work involved and the person undertaking the work.

Last year the HSE board refused to recommend amending the law to impose an upper workplace temperature limit despite strong trade union arguments in favour of a limit.

HSE commissioned research that concluded that "on balance, the workplace temperature issue is not one that justifies active regulatory intervention". Instead the study called for "improved joint working between all parties to the issue – government, trade unions and employer representatives".

Earlier this year unions circulated an HSE questionnaire to help it gather evidence as to whether high temperatures at work are a problem in particular sectors or across the board. It hopes that the responses will also assist in identifying practical and effective steps that can be taken to tackle the issue.

✚ The union case for a legally enforceable maximum temperature is set out at [www.tuc.org.uk/extras/maxtemp2009.pdf](http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/maxtemp2009.pdf)





## Nervous in court

**Q** Does someone with a personal injury claim against their employer or another person always have to go to court? I have been told by the FBU's lawyers that I have a good claim, but I'm very nervous about giving evidence in court.

**A** Very few personal injury claims go to court.

Court appearances increase legal costs which are payable by the person responsible for the injury or their insurer.

If there is no dispute over who was at fault for the accident that caused the injury and no dispute about the level and nature of the injuries sustained, then "the other side" – usually the defendant's insurance company – would usually rather settle the claim out of court to save on costs.

That is not to say that they will always do so quickly. Insurers tend to drag their heels.

Even when there is little dispute, they may quibble over things that result in the injured person's solicitor having to "issue" the case – that is lodge the claim with the court – in order to get things moving.

More often than not, an issued claim will still be settled before the court hearing.

In extreme cases, where there is a dispute and the insurance company refuses to accept responsibility for the accident and injury, or thinks the injury is not as serious as is claimed, then you may have to attend court.

Court hearings of personal injury claims tend to spend much of the time on evidence from medical experts and both sides putting forward their legal arguments.

The claimant themselves often has only to read out a statement about what happened to them.

Your solicitor would talk you through the process to ensure you are comfortable with it long before any final decision needs to be made.



SATOSHI KAMBAYASHI

## Legal Beagle

Answers to some frequently asked legal questions that members put to the FBU

### Capability reviews

**Q** I have a medical condition that occupational health says makes me unfit for operational work until it improves, but that I am able to carry out other duties. My brigade, however, has said that I must attend a capability review and that I may have to leave the service. What are my rights?

**A** Depending on what your medical condition is, you may have rights under the

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). This requires employers to make "reasonable adjustments" to enable an employee with a condition that is classed as a disability under the DDA to remain in employment.

To be protected by the Act, employees have to show that they have a "physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities".

To satisfy the definition in the Act, the disability must:

- have lasted at least 12 months, or

- be likely to last at least 12 months, or
- be likely to last for the rest of the person's lifetime (if less than 12 months)

The Act gives examples of reasonable steps that employers might have to take including:

- altering working hours
- allowing time off for rehabilitation or treatment
- allocating some of the disabled person's duties to someone else
- transferring the disabled person to a vacant post or another place of work
- giving or arranging training to the disabled person or others
- providing a reader or interpreter
- acquiring or modifying equipment or reference manuals
- adjusting the premises
- providing supervision or other support.

The key question is what is "reasonable"? The Act says that this should be decided by looking at the extent to which making the adjustment would address the problem, how practical it is for the employer to do it, the cost of making it and the financial resources of the employer.

The sort of thing your brigade might consider, therefore, is moving you to office-based work or community-based fire safety work. It also needs to have all the medical evidence before making any decision.

Speak to your FBU rep and ensure that they are present at the capability review. If the brigade carries out its threat to dismiss you, then you will have the right to appeal against the dismissal and you might also be able to lodge employment tribunal claims for unfair dismissal and disability discrimination.

→ The advice published here is not intended as legal advice on individual cases. Write in with your legal problem to [legalbeagle@fbu.org.uk](mailto:legalbeagle@fbu.org.uk) and those of widest relevance to FBU members in the workplace will be selected and answered in future editions. With thanks to Thompsons solicitors.

# 'We win as a team, we lose as a team'



**FBU region 9 secretary Adrian Clarke coaches his daughter Georgia's football team**

**T**he beautiful game is dominating many living rooms this summer. But it's not only the World Cup that's been preoccupying Adrian Clarke, FBU regional secretary for East Anglia. Adrian, a long-time supporter of the Posh (Peterborough United), coaches the football team his daughter Georgia plays for. So, as well as watching world class matches from South Africa on TV, father and daughter are already thinking about what the next season will bring for Netherton United Diamonds under-14s.

Georgia, a karate black belt at eight, is a sports all-rounder. And, fortunately for Adrian, she's decided to focus on football since packing in karate. This has helped him reconnect with the sport beyond holding a season ticket for the Posh. "I used to play Sunday league football about 30 years ago and got involved again through Georgia," he explained. "When Georgia said she wanted to start playing I was more than happy to get roped in."

Before long, Adrian was coaching the team every week and he had bought Georgia her own season ticket



for the Posh. She had a stint playing in goal in the early years but now plays on the right as a midfield attacker. Last year, Adrian, a frontline firefighter for 24 years before taking up his current job two years ago, qualified as an FA accredited coach and is getting ready for his fifth season as team coach.

Adrian, Georgia and her teammates are also getting used to a change in their team's name and status. Until June this year their club was known as Peterborough Diamonds – the largest girls' and women's football club in the area. It has now joined forces with Netherton United, the biggest boy's and men's club in the area. In the coming season the team will be turning out for Netherton United Diamonds under-14s, coached, as before, by Adrian.

## Football for all

Adrian and assistant team coach Steve Johnson, whose daughter also plays in the team, are sharing in the team's success. When the World Cup was well under way in mid-June, the side won the Wisbech St Mary tournament, which should augur well for next season.

It's not just about scoring goals, of course – the club is committed to outreach, inclusion and "football for all". But the team has an impressive record. As under-12's, playing seven-a-side mini soccer, they won both the Cambridgeshire League and the Cambridgeshire Cup for their age group.

Last season, as under-13s, the team came third in their league, playing on a threequarter-sized pitch and grappling with the offside rule for the first time. They held their nerve when their goalkeeper was injured out







#### ADRIAN CLARKE

Adrian Clarke is the FBU's regional secretary for East Anglia and coach of Netherton United Diamond Girls under-14 football team.



Left: Netherton United Diamond Girls won the Wisbech St Mary football tournament in June. Adrian Clarke is on the right, his daughter Georgia is directly in front of him and his assistant Steve Johnson is on the left.

Above: Rihanne Criddle and Alice Hauck (below) in action for Netherton United Diamond Girls under-14s.



in the first game – other team members took it in turns to play in goal for the rest of the season. They got to the semi-final but lost in a penalty shootout.

In future years, the young footballers will benefit from the state of the art all-weather pitch that is in the pipeline at The Grange. The link up is bringing benefits to both teams. Or, as the local paper put it: "Diamonds add more sparkle to Netherton."

#### Only expenses

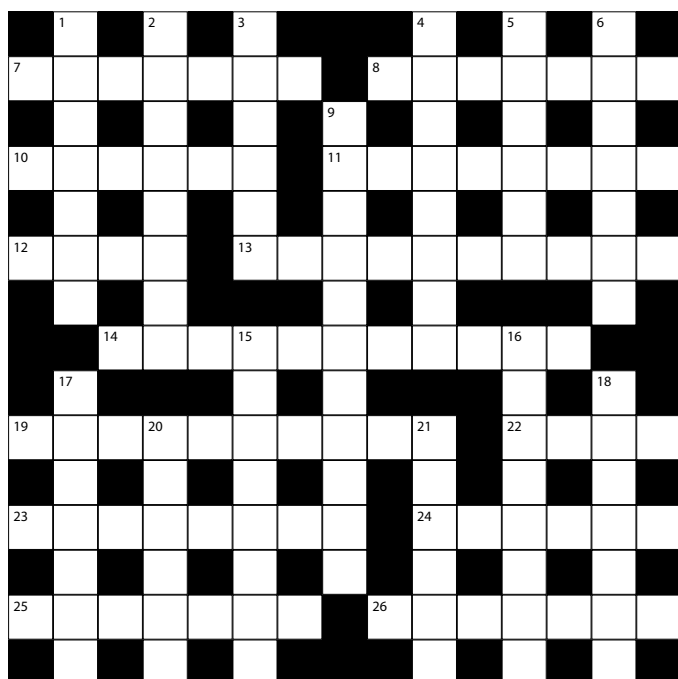
Adrian and Steve were the only men on the FA coaching course. It was skilfully delivered by Nikki Johnson, who had to go to Sweden to get paid to play football – England Ladies players still only get expenses. But the fact that an able female footballer was delivering coaching made the point that women can sometimes teach men a thing or two when it comes to the beautiful game.

Encouraging women's and girls' football contributed to Netherton's success in getting cash from the Big Lottery Fund to help pay for the new pitch. "The good thing is that all our teams train on the same night," Adrian says. "Younger sisters who are brought along will see girls and women training, and the hope is some will be inspired to start playing and get involved."

Netherton United Diamonds under-14s will be holding open trials over the summer. By the start of the season, Adrian hopes there will be around 15 in the squad. "Nobody gets turned away. It's an excellent sport for both girls and boys, builds discipline and team working and fitness. We always tell our girls: 'We win as a team, we lose as a team.'"



## Quick Crossword



### ACROSS

- 7 Grand house (7)
- 8 Got there (7)
- 10 Thoroughfare (6)
- 11 Tell off, reprove (8)
- 12 One of 4's fire crew (4)
- 13 Glasses; grand shows or pageants (10)
- 14 To agree in time; to coordinate electronic devices (11)
- 19 Adapted into play or film (10)
- 22 Two of 4's fire crew! (4)
- 23 Perceptible by touch; of something real (8)
- 24 Hole or tunnel, especially one dug by animal (6)
- 25 Overlays with thin layer of fine wood or other material (7)
- 26 Washed (7)

### DOWN

- 1 Industrial plant (7)
- 2 Gathering – of children in school? (8)
- 3 Ways to get from A to B (6)
- 4 Iconic 1960s children's TV show, narrated by Brian Cant (8)
- 5 Outdoor meal (6)
- 6 Infectious fever featuring itchy spots (7)
- 9 Unwelcome guest (11)
- 15 One of 4's fire crew (8)
- 16 Clark Kent's alter ego (8)
- 17 Places for amusements? (7)
- 18 Blanked, commonly (7)
- 20 Barney, one of 4's fire crew (6)
- 21 One of 4's fire crew (6)



### Solution to June 2010 crossword

#### Winner of the May 2010 quiz

F Sweeney, Edinburgh

#### Answers to

#### June 2010 quiz

- 1. A – the khaki election
- 2. C – 1974
- 3. C – 1918
- 4. B – win three consecutive elections
- 5. B – being locked out of polling stations

PA PHOTOS



## Prize quiz

### Win a £50 iTunes voucher

#### 1 Who captained Argentina in the 1998 World Cup?

- a. Diego Maradona
- b. Diego Simeone
- c. Gabriel Batistuta
- d. Nestor Sensini

#### 2 Which player helped get his Premiership team mate Wayne Rooney a red card in the 2006 World Cup?

- a. Nemanja Vidić
- b. Park Ji-Sung
- c. Cristiano Ronaldo
- d. Patrice Evra

#### 3 Who won the Golden Boot in the 1990 World Cup?

- a. Salvatore "Toto" Schillaci
- b. Gary Lineker
- c. Oleg Salenko
- d. Rudi Völler

#### 4 Name the only player to date to have played in three



#### consecutive World Cup finals:

- a. Marcos Evangelista de Moraes – known as "Cafu"
- b. Zinedine Zidane
- c. Oliver Khan
- d. Francesco Totti

#### 5 Name the player who scored the most World Cup goals between 1930 and 2006:

- a. Pelé
- b. Ronaldo
- c. Gerd Müller
- d. Juste Fontaine

PA PHOTOS



### HOW TO ENTER

To win a £50 iTunes voucher please send your answers to the Prize Quiz by 31 July 2010 on a postcard to: Prize Competition (July 2010), FBU Head Office, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT2 7AE. Include your name, address and membership number. The winner will be selected at random from all correct entries.





# StationCat

... brings you the news they don't want you to hear

## Overlooked something?



Who regulates the regulators? Does a fish rot from the head first? Questions are now being asked, after it emerged that the

London headquarters of the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG), which is responsible for fire safety policy in England, was served with a fire safety Crown enforcement notice earlier this year.

On 16 February 2010 the Crown Premises Inspection Group served an enforcement notice on CLG's Eland House premises in London, under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

It listed a number of alleged breaches of the law, including installing a cafeteria in the atrium, which may lead to "uncontrolled fire spread throughout the building". Other failings include an unsuitable and insufficient risk assessment, not maintaining the fire alarm system and lack of evidence of adequate training and fire safety information to staff.

The official response from CLG: blame the previous lot – it happened on their watch.

But no prosecutions are expected. As Eland House is Crown premises, the responsible person cannot be prosecuted. Incidentally, **the Crown Premises Inspection Group comes under the government's chief fire and rescue adviser's unit – also based at Eland House.**

## A coalition too far



It's a strange tale of murky back room deals. The Conservatives lost so many council seats in London this year that it looked as though their man Brian Coleman could no longer chair the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA).

Although the appointment is in the gift of mayor Boris Johnson, it would be pretty odd if Johnson appointed a chair who did not have the confidence of a majority of his colleagues.

The only way he would have that is if the Liberals lined up behind him. Coleman tried to get the Liberals to support him. "I invite the Lib Dem members to share my large bed," he said. But they made it clear that their national coalition with the Tories would not be replicated in County Hall.

So how did Boris Johnson justify the

appointment of Coleman anyway? Quite simple, really. **He just changed the way the procedure for allocating seats on the LFEPA is applied**, in order to maintain a "strong leadership".

## Pension relief for chiefs



A close shave for one or two chief fire officers, whose names we won't mention here. The investigation of public sector pensions on **the radio programme File on Four was to feature the huge sums which a few chief fire officers have been getting in pension payments**, and the means by which they get these sums – not a pretty story, we're told. At the last moment, this section of the programme ended up on the cutting room floor. I have this information from a thoroughly reliable source, a friendly cat in Broadcasting House – I'd call him my mole in the BBC, but cats don't like moles.

## How the other half thinks



Despite the absence of chief fire officers, the programme offered us a glimpse of how the other half thinks. Prime ministers and other top politicians have been saying for years that public sector pensions aren't sustainable in the long run. But they never mentioned that **former prime ministers get £109,000 a year from the public purse for the rest of their lives**. That bit of information was prised out of the civil service with a Freedom of Information Act request by SNP MP Angus McNeil. What's the money for? How do the former PMs use it? No one knows. File on Four's reporter Gerry Northam wanted to ask Gordon Brown, Tony Blair and John Major whether they took their £109,000, and if so, what they did with it. None of these three eminent gentlemen were available to answer these questions.

## Take your pick



In these harsh days, when the talk is all of cuts, it's nice to know that there's plenty of money for the really important things. **Tory-led Suffolk county council is to have a temporary head of communications for six months on pay of up to**

**£3,500 a week** – which is more than the prime minister gets. *The Beccles and Bungay Journal* reports Kathy Pollard, leader of the council's Liberal Democrats, as saying: "What would the public rather have – four new firefighters or one head of communications? We all know what the answer would be." No coalition there, then.

## Nice work if you can get it



In this age of austerity, it seems that those who get to whisper in ministers' ears are not so chaste. The new coalition government contains 68 special advisers, whose responsibilities extend beyond the ritual carrying of the minister's bag.

At least 29 earn more than £58,200. Top of the list is Andy Coulson (below, with Chancellor George Osborne), on £140,000



(capped just beneath the prime minister's salary). The Cat recalls Coulson as editor of the *News of the World* when a reporter was jailed for hacking into the phones of aides to members of the royal family. He resigned after the disclosures. An employment tribunal also found that **Coulson had presided over a culture of bullying** when he was *News of the World* editor.

✂ if you have any snippets you think Station Cat should get his sharp claws into email: [stationcat@fbu.org.uk](mailto:stationcat@fbu.org.uk)

# 25-year badges



**Jacqui LeSurf (l)** Walthamstow, London, green watch, receives her 25-year badge from WAC secretary Sally Harper



**Wales regional chair Roger Perry (r)** receives his 25-year badge from general secretary Matt Wrack



**Helen Harrison (l)** NWC rep, region 7, receives her 25-year badge from NWC secretary Kerry Baigent



**Gerald Brady (r)** Towcester, Northants, receives his 25-year badge from national officer David Green



**Charlie Hodge (r)** Clarkston, Glasgow, blue watch, receives his 25-year badge from 'B' division chair David McRoberts



**Barney O'Malley (r)** Daventry, receives his 25-year badge from Northants brigade secretary Gary Mitchell



**Norman James (r)** Daventry, receives his 25-year badge from Northants brigade secretary Gary Mitchell



**Northants FBU secretary Gary Mitchell (r)** receives his 25-year badge from national officer David Green



**Jenny Impey (r)**, NWC rep region 11, receives her 25-year badge from region 10 NWC rep Sally Harper



**Karen Pagan (l)** Chingford, London, white watch, receives her 25-year badge from WAC secretary Sally Harper



**Wales regional official Chris Howells (r)** receives his 25-year badge from general secretary Matt Wrack

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## Change of address or next of kin

Advise your Brigade Membership Secretary of any change of address and Head Office of changes to next of kin or nominations for benefits.

## FBU FREEPHONE LEGAL ADVICE LINE

**0808 100 6061**

The line provides advice for **personal injury, family law, wills, conveyancing, personal finance and consumer issues.**

For disciplinary and employment-related queries contact your local FBU representative.

**T THOMPSONS SOLICITORS**

Please send photographic prints or digital picture files to: Firefighter, FBU, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7AE or firefighter@fbu.org.uk Please include FULL DETAILS for every picture – full names of everyone who is in it; their station/brigade/watch etc; where they are in the picture (eg: left to right); their union posts/branch if relevant; and where and when it was taken.